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AUTHOR Drummond, Robert W.
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ABSTRACT

The intercollegiate forensics community appears less receptive to women than it is to men. Women report a variety of positive and negative gender-based experiences in intercollegiate forensics. Positive experiences tend to include women into the intercollegiate forensics community or to allow women to include others in the community. Negative experiences tend to exclude women from the forensics community or to label them as "other" in the activity. Positive gender-based experiences reported by these subjects include: (1) expressions of gratitude or recognition; (2) mentoring; (3) access through quotas; (4) consciousness raising; and (5) nurturing and demonstrations of personal concern. Negative gender-based experiences reported by these subjects include: (1) sexual harassment; (2) sexism; (3) discrimination in employment; (4) lack of support and failure to recognize the problem; (5) aggression and conflict; and (6) overemphasis on competition. The claim is supported that women mature morally toward an ethic of caring and inclusion. It is also suggested that the intercollegiate forensics community may operate as a patriarchy. (Contains 32 references.) (Author/CR)

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Women in Intercollegiate Forensics: Experiencing Otherness

by

Robert W. Greenstreet
Assistant Professor
Communication Department
East Central University
Ada, OK

presented at the annual meeting of the
Speech Communication Association
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Abstract

The intercollegiate forensics community appears less receptive to women than it is to men. Women report a variety of positive and negative gender-based experiences in intercollegiate forensics. Positive experiences tend to include women into the intercollegiate forensics community, or to allow women to include others in the community. Negative experiences tend to exclude women from the intercollegiate forensics community, or to label them as "other" in the activity. Positive gender-based experiences reported by these subjects include: (1) expressions of gratitude or recognition, (2) mentoring, (3) access through quotas, (4) consciousness-raising, and (5) nurturing/demonstrations of personal concern. Negative gender-based experiences reported by these subjects include: (1) sexual harassment, (2) sexism, (3) discrimination in employment, (4) lack of support/failure to recognize the problem, (5) aggression/conflict, and (6) overemphasis on competition. The author supports the claim that women mature morally toward an ethic of caring and inclusion. He also suggests that the intercollegiate forensics community may operate as a patriarchy.

Women in Intercollegiate Forensics:
Experiencing Otherness

That women's experiences in intercollegiate forensics (i.e., competitive debate and individual events) differ from the experiences of their male contemporaries comes as no surprise to the thousands of women who have participated, nor is it entirely unexpected in an activity which traces its historical origins to a time when women were barred from higher education (Greenstreet, 1989). That such inequity continues to exist nearly a century after the advent of intercollegiate forensics activities is more difficult to accept (Norton, 1982; Rieke & Sillars, 1975). Despite formal calls to encourage forensics participation by members of traditionally underrepresented groups, the intercollegiate forensics community has not reached out to women (McBath, 1975; Parson, 1984; Ziegelmueller, 1984; Bartanen, 1993; Duke, 1994). One reason significant improvement has not occurred may be that research into gender differences in forensics has not been directed toward any particular goal.

Recent research provides such direction in the form of a taxonomy of women's gender based experiences in intercollegiate forensics (Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, & Piercy, 1996). This taxonomy affords forensics researchers a systematic approach to the phenomenon of gender inequity. When the intercollegiate forensics community understands which experiences women perceive to be gender-based, it will be able to recognize and address those experiences. This paper presents and explains the taxonomy, tying in the results of other forensics research where possible, in the hope of spurring further research. It also suggests a method for exploring the experiences of traditionally underrepresented groups.

The Critical Incident Technique

Before considering the taxonomy itself, it is helpful to understand how it was developed. Data were gathered through the Critical Incident Technique, a method which has been used in thousands of studies in both education and industry. Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy (1996) asked over 280 female members of forensics organizations to provide brief descriptions about specific gender-based events they found significant to their forensics experience. Flanagan (1954) writes "critical incidents obtained from interviews can be relied on to provide a relatively accurate account" of the subjects' experiences (p. 331). Completed incident reports are reviewed by a panel of readers working independently. The panelists' task is to distill the subjects' statements and to cluster them within the broad categories the subjects have determined (Downs, 1988). If a subject feels an incident is positive, readers must accept that subject's judgment in regard to its classification. Since all data are provided by subjects in narrative form, the method encourages those conducting the study to adopt the framework of the subjects, reducing the likelihood of research yielding a self-fulfilling prophesy. Critical Incident studies typically produce very low sample sizes because the task of providing written incident reports to researchers can be somewhat daunting. Since the objective of Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy's (1996) study is to develop a taxonomy of possibilities rather than to determine the frequency or the severity of reported experiences, sample size is not a concern for this paper.

Variations on the Critical Incident Technique have been used in recent studies in the discipline of communication. The *Journal of Applied*

Communication Research (Wood, 1992) recently published a "SPECIAL SECTION—'TELLING OUR STORIES': SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE COMMUNICATION DISCIPLINE" (capitals in original) to focus attention on an issue critical to communication scholars. The narratives provided by respondents in the study represent critical incidents focused on sexual harassment. Foss and Foss (1994) indicate the use of personal experience in feminist scholarship empowers women by validating their experiences and helping them make sense of their world: "The exploration and use of personal experience as data is a significant and subversive act in the process of constructing new methods and theories that truly take women's perspectives into account" (Foss & Foss, 1994, p. 42). Eichler and Lapointe (1985) feel that since as a group women have been largely overlooked in the past, it may be necessary for the foreseeable future to focus studies on women to establish a base for future research which includes both genders.

The taxonomy developed through this method reproduced in Table 1 includes matrixes of both positive and negative experiences. While these matrixes have not been confirmed by further study, part of Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy's (1996) purpose is to enable and encourage such study.

Table 1

Taxonomy of Women's Gender-Based Experiences in Intercollegiate Forensics

Positive Experiences	I.	Expressions of Gratitude or Recognition
		A. From Males
		B. From Females
	II.	Mentoring

		A. By Males B. By Females
	III.	Access through Quotas
	IV.	Consciousness-Raising
	V.	Nurturing/Personal Concern
Negative Experiences	I.	Sexual Harassment
		A. Sexual Propositions B. Verbal Abuse C. Remarks about Body or Appearance
	II.	Sexism
		A. Traditional Roles B. Feminine is less than Masculine
	III.	Discrimination in Employment
	IV.	Lack of Support/Failure to Recognize Problem
		A. By Colleagues B. By Coach
	V.	Aggression/Conflict
		A. Female-Female B. Female-Male
	VI.	Overemphasis on Competition

The Positive Matrix

Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, & Piercy (1996) organize women's positive gender-based forensics experiences in the following taxonomy.

Gratitude/Recognition

Expressions of Gratitude or Recognition include such things as former students thanking coaches for encouraging them in forensics, contestants and coaches from other programs recognizing professional contributions, and remarks reinforcing professional status or personal achievement. One subject reports a graduating senior male thanking her for encouraging his participation in forensics; another is recognized as a trailblazer for her contemporaries. Typically these memorable moments occur during pivotal events or times of significant achievement for those expressing gratitude or recognition to the subjects. This area is separate from area V., Nurturing/Personal Concern, because it deals with items which are work-related.

Mentoring

Mentoring involves encouragement toward professional development as well as help along the way. Subjects reported being mentored by both male and female undergraduate and graduate faculty. One subject credits her success at a national championship tournament to the tutelage of her feminist (in her judgment) male coach. Another recalls a female program director encouraging her to enter the field. Important aspects of the mentoring relationship include professional development as well as re-visioning the subject's personal orientation.

Access

Access through Quotas includes three instances where subjects felt their gender identification opened doors to professional advancement or enhanced status. One subject reports being nominated for (but not elected to) national office was a positive experience because the organization became

more gender-sensitive as a result of her candidacy. Another reports being invited to judge the final round of debate at a national championship tournament:

> When I asked why me? [sic] the caller responded that they needed a representative from my district and he was looking for female judges to be represented.... I was flattered although I wondered if I would have been considered if I was [sic] a male.

Even when not fully accepted, subjects report increased access as a positive experience. One subject reports being named to the administrative committee for a tournament which serves to qualify students to participate in the national championships. While she indicates "the males rarely spoke to me about anything pertaining to the tournament" and " I ended up doing go-for type things," she nevertheless classifies the incident as positive.

Consciousness-Raising

Bjork (1993) indicated one of the potential benefits of the Women's Debate Forum is that recognition of gender concerns becomes more widespread as women become more conscious of the manifestations of discrimination. Consciousness-Raising deals with learning experiences, sometimes simply through participation in the activity. One subject reports using an impromptu speaking topic to "crystallize" her thinking concerning "the women's movement."

Other incidents involve professional activity around forensics events. One subject reports a women's debate forum helped her realize she was not the only one perceiving different treatment due to gender. Another reports a confrontative job interview in which

> A male department chair...informed me that he had never hired a female teaching assistant in forensics and asked why he should amend that policy for me.... The job was offered to me. I took great pleasure in declining that position.

While this latter subject reports difficulty rating the incident as positive, she also indicates its value is that she learned from it.

Nurturing

Nurturing includes experiences of a personal nature, such as caring for someone who is ill, substituting for a parent, or personal encouragement unrelated to the job. Subjects reported nurturing as well as being nurtured by males and females. One subject recalls a tournament director finding her a place to rest and suggesting methods to relieve her discomfort as she suffered from the flu. Sometimes subjects themselves provided the nurturing. One subject reports "I served as a female role model for" a student "and had fostered her growth as a person [emphasis in original]."

The Negative Matrix

Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, & Piercy (1996) developed a six category taxonomy of negative gender-based experiences reported by their subjects (see Table 1). They subdivided four of the major categories in the hope that such division would provide potentially significant distinctions for future researchers. Their taxonomy of women's negative gender-based forensics experiences indicated by critical incidence reports follows.

Sexual Harassment

Women who participate in intercollegiate forensics risk sexual harassment (Stepp, Simerly, and Logue, 1993; CEDA, 1993). The category of Sexual Harassment includes: sexual propositions, verbal abuse, and remarks about body or appearance. All incidents in the research report males harassing females. While subjects were not asked to indicate the strength of their response to the incidents, these reports often included very directly worded statements attesting to subjects' feelings.

Sexual Propositions

Szwapa (1992) reports that "almost forty percent [of survey respondents] reported being the victims of forcible sexual advances at debate tournaments or at home while preparing for debate tournaments" (p. 11). The frequency and nature of reported sexual harassment should come as no surprise to those familiar with research in the area. Certainly the discipline of communication is not immune to such practices (Wood, 1992). Dziech and Weiner (1984) provide further proof of the ubiquitous and insidious nature of sexual harassment in higher education. Their study contends as many as 30% of women involved in higher education may expect to be sexually harassed during their stays in the academy.

One subject writes "The clearest memory I have regarding being a woman..." occurred while attending a coaches' reception and being harassed. Another, reporting incidents of continuing propositioning, writes that "memories of the actual conversations are vague, but not the effects they had on me. Even years later looking back I would describe it as a chilling effect." She further reports feeling her team's results would be in jeopardy if she responded too negatively, and adds that "My discomfort with male-female relations on the circuit was a contributing factor in my decision to disengage

from...coaching." Another reports being propositioned by a coach for a period of over five years, beginning during her junior year of college.

Verbal Abuse

Reports of verbal abuse were difficult to misinterpret. One subject reports after she, as a judge, asked a debater to clarify his use of evidence he "flew into a rage yelling at his partner, the other team, and myself. We were 'bitches,' and 'fucking idiots.'" Another, attempting to encourage debaters who had finished to vacate the room so an already overdue round could begin, reports that "One of them turned on me and yelled 'who the fuck do you think you are, bitch?' (emphasis in original). Subjects also report being disappointed that when this sort of behavior is reported to these students' program directors, no action is taken.

Remarks about Body or Appearance

Uninvited and inappropriate remarks about the subject's body or physical appearance generally came out of the blue. Two incidents stem from written comments on judges' ballots referring to the contestants' looks or bodies rather than to their performances. One subject writes: "I found this extremely offensive and inappropriate. I was angry at this male judge... [plus] disappointed in my male coach who did nothing about it." A third incident reports a short-lived male mutiny when, as new program director, the female coach banned puerile male behavior from squad functions.

Sexism

The category of sexism is divided into two subcategories: traditional roles, and feminine is less than masculine.

Traditional Roles

Sexism was often reported as stereotyping the subject into traditional roles, sometimes by the person the subjects expected to mentor them into the field. One subject reports being told to go home and cook dinner for her husband rather than attend a night class in forensics program management. The instructor, "the head debate coach and my boss," told her, "debate is a man's world" which she should leave. At the time, she was a year away from her Ph.D. Other subjects report male acquaintances assuming the subjects' reduced level of involvement resulted from decisions to bear children rather than seek advancement in their careers.

Feminine is Less than Masculine

Friedley and Manchester (1985) found males were much more likely to receive superior ranks and ratings at national championship tournaments. In a subsequent study, Friedley and Manchester (1987) found contest judges in individual events generally treat males more favorably than females. J. Murphy (1989) tried to explain such differences by arguing that women engage in less competitive "women's speech" patterns. While documenting the debate community's "unconscionable" affirmative action record, Logue (1993, p. 8) contended women are unsuited to the competitive world of debate (and better suited to collaborative activities.) Of course, numerous researchers (Wright and Hosman, 1983; Crosby and Nyquist, 1977; Martin and Craig, 1983; Kennedy and Camden, 1983; Dindia, 1987; Infante, Trebing, Shepherd, and Seeds, 1984; Bradley, 1987; and McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, and Gale, 1977) refute the claims that women are less rational, less expressive, less assertive, or less argumentative than men.

These reports relate expressions that "feminine" attitudes, abilities, or events are less significant than their "masculine" counterparts. One subject writes about being assigned "soft" (i.e., oral interpretation) events rather than debate or public address events. She also reports her male students' success in those events was attributed to factors other than their preparation and presentation (e.g., the events were perceived as less challenging than other events). Another subject reports increased success in her events as a result of adopting a more masculine look. A third subject reports seeking election to national office and having her candidacy belittled by a colleague who felt she would be foolish to oppose a man (whom she had taught for several years).

Discrimination in Employment

Discrimination in Employment deals with hiring, promotion, treatment on the job, and assignment of job responsibilities. All reports detail discrimination by men. One subject reports a college president telling her the school was going to hire the other (male) finalist for a position because driving to tournaments in severe winter weather was too dangerous for a woman. She was also asked if she would join the women's aid group (composed of faculty wives) to do work for the church which sponsors the school. A second subject reports being promised a high school position which was given to a man. Another subject reports that during tournament trips, she was roomed with undergraduate contestants while other graduate assistants were not.

Lack of Support

Lack of Support/Failure to Recognize Problem includes dismissal or trivialization of grievances by colleagues as well as failure by higher-ups to seek redress for grievances. A former Executive Secretary of the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) writes: "There is no evidence that we are successfully reaching out to diverse groups.... Relying on our pool of 'ex-debaters' to judge all of our rounds, retrenches the very patriarchal attitudes we seek to change [sic]" (Bartanen, 1993, pp. 2-3). Logue (1993) claims intercollegiate debate marginalizes women (as well as minorities) through a structure which assures white male dominance. One subject has reduced her involvement in forensics and increased participation in student congress-type activities. She writes: "There seems to be less awkwardness in the presence of women and more respect for everyone's contribution in this activity."

Forensics research sometimes ignores the presence of women. Tomlinson (1986) failed to consider gender-oriented issues (e.g., participation rates, bias, harassment) in an examination of issues confronting CEDA. When Littlefield and Sellnow (1992) studied stress at the AFA-NIET, they did not isolate gender as a variable. Porter and Sommerness' (1991) review of "Legal Issues Confronting the Director of Forensics" mentioned no gender-specific legal issues. Gill (1990); Sellnow and Ziegelmueller (1988); and McMillan and Todd-Mancillas (1991) gathered sufficient demographic data in their research projects to differentiate gender differences. None appears to have sought such distinctions, even when gender demographics are reported in their results.

Aggression/Conflict

Aggression/Conflict includes inappropriate responses to conflict by the subjects, usurpation of the subject's authority, and (in one instance)

prohibition by a female judge of an argument from male debaters because the argument was overly-masculine. None of the reported incidents involves male-female conflict, perhaps because such conflicts are subsumed into more specific categories. One subject writes of disappointment in her own conduct, as she failed to confront an unprofessional judge. A former debater reports a "cat fight" with two female opponents during a debate. A third reports a female coach attempting to assume control of the subject's results tabulation room.

Overemphasis on Competition

Overemphasis on Competition indicates the perception that one subject's female colleagues place forensic activity too centrally in their lives. This subject felt her colleagues should discuss something other than the activity during their breaks from it.

Discussion

The taxonomy of women's gender-based experiences in intercollegiate forensics (see Table 1) suggests women value those experiences which include them--or allow them to include others--in the activity. The taxonomy also suggests experiences which exclude women and reinforce their identity as "other" are likely to discourage their participation. The negative matrix of the taxonomy suggests a patriarchic social system, working to deter threats to white male hegemony. While this latter conclusion is not entirely supported, available evidence appears to point rather strongly in that direction.

Positive Experiences Include

The positive matrix includes many items male and female teachers find rewarding about their profession (expressions of gratitude/recognition, mentoring, consciousness-raising, and nurturing/personal concern). Several items appear to support stereotypes of traditional gender roles for women as nurturers and care-givers, but (as in previously-cited challenges to "Feminine is less than Masculine") another explanation, as suggested by Foss and Foss (1983), appears more likely.

The positive matrix appears to support Gilligan's (1982) argument that women mature toward a different moral ethic from men. Gilligan argues women mature toward an ethic of caring and affiliation rather than toward individuation. The women studied by Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy (1996) appreciate experiences which draw them toward other people in a mutually caring manner. Such experiences include them (and allow them to include others) in the intercollegiate forensics community, reveal the concern of that community for them as individuals, and reinforce their sense of agency by recognizing their unique place in that community.

Only one item stands out as clearly a concern of a traditionally underrepresented group: access through quotas. Accepting the subject's apparent perspective, this item may also be viewed as inclusive. After all, as a result of the demand for diversity, the subjects were able to participate on a more elite level in forensics activities. They also reported their participation helped open access for other women by making the intercollegiate forensics community more sensitive to issues of inclusion, at least insofar as gender is concerned.

Negative Experiences Exclude

The negative matrix further supports Gilligan's (1982) view, especially as several items correspond to behaviors which segregate or indicate either neutrality or outright hostility. Women in the field report being confronted with sexual harassment, sexism, employment discrimination, a lack of collegial support (or even collegial awareness that these events constitute a problem,) and gender-based aggression from other females--all of which are behaviors which exclude them and which label them as "different."

Harassment makes the victim feel isolated and vulnerable. In one report, the victim also felt her students' success was also at risk. The combination of feeling personally excluded from the comfort and security males appear to share, and, at the same time, exposing those one is charged with nurturing to predatory behavior, is not an attractive prospect. As if the prospect of harassment alone were not enough to deter women from participating in the activity, those who would normally be expected to provide a support system--teammates, coaches, and colleagues--are likely to disregard such incidents, thus denying the significance of both the behavior and the victim. Again, such behavior denies the victim's agency and excludes her from the community's care. She becomes special, different, and outside the norm. If Gilligan (1982) is correct, this exclusionary treatment should be particularly uncomfortable for women, who at the highest level of maturity seek to connect and to include.

Forensics as Patriarchy

The picture provided by the negative matrix is of a field unprepared or unwilling to accept women as participants. Women are sexually

propositioned, verbally abused, and subject to inappropriate random remarks concerning their bodies or appearance. They sometimes perceive that their responses to such behavior will determine their students' future success. They are discouraged from entering nontraditional fields or assuming nontraditional roles (such as arguing assertively or cross-examining aggressively). They are consistently told to stay within their traditional stereotyped female roles, and are reminded that such roles are necessarily less significant than the masculine roles within the activity. They are subject to special gender barriers in gaining employment, and are treated as "different" (read "inferior") once employed. When they bring these problems to those who should help resolve them, they are met with indifference or are discouraged from raising legitimate concerns. They are attacked by those with whom they wish to cooperate, as if every aspect of the intercollegiate forensics community were some sort of competition where one party has to win and the other must lose. Haslett, Geis, and Carter (1992) describe such behaviors as consistent with a social system used to exclude women or devalue their work. Lewis and Simon (1986) report similar experiences in higher education classrooms. If intercollegiate forensics provides such a system, and for many of these respondents it clearly does, lack of participation by women should be easy to understand.

Future Research

While the taxonomy appears to describe a patriarchy determined to retain its hegemony, this data alone cannot justify such a description of the field. The matrixes described above are based on very few responses from a small percentage of the possible sample. Additionally, Greenstreet, Joeckel,

Martin, and Piercy (1996) did not ask subjects to rate the experiences in terms of their affect loading, nor do they provide any indication of either the frequency with which these events occur or the arenas in which they might be found. However, their subject selection process (inviting participation from subjects identified on the rosters of forensics organizations) necessarily biased the results in such a fashion that they are likely *more positive* than one might expect. Still, future research is necessary to confirm and refine this taxonomy of gender-based experiences.

Once the taxonomy is established, researchers may begin to tackle the tougher questions, such as how these factors relate to women's decisions to remain in the field or leave it, the frequency with which women experience these phenomena, and the commitment of the intercollegiate forensics community to resolving issues raised by its formally announced desire to include traditionally underrepresented groups in the activity. Certainly, CEDA (1993) has already taken steps to formally discourage many of the most odious of the behaviors reflected in the negative matrix. The taxonomy developed by Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy (1996) enables researchers to draft surveys which may be circulated at tournaments, among program alumnae, or as exit surveys for those who choose to discontinue participation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to share the recently-developed taxonomy of women's gender-based experiences in forensics in the hope that the taxonomy will enable the forensics community to understand those experiences. Such an understanding should enable those involved in that

community to begin movement toward the goals espoused in Sedalia and Evanston and find ways to encourage participation in forensics from a group which has traditionally been underrepresented—women.

The taxonomy provides a starting point from which research may move forward. These matrixes also inform forensics practitioners of experiences their students and colleagues may encounter as part of their forensic education. It is not difficult to understand why a person experiencing what the negative matrix reports would be unlikely to continue participating in the activity which enabled those experiences. Clearly, there are valid reasons women may continue to be underrepresented in the intercollegiate forensics community, especially in debate. But just as clearly, the positive matrix offers experiences which have continued to attract women (and men) to the activity.

The method used to develop the taxonomy also offers promise for researching the experiences of other traditionally underrepresented groups. By encouraging researchers to adopt the perspective of their subjects, and by encouraging the subjects to share their perceptions in their own words the Critical Incident Technique affords researchers the opportunity to glimpse the world through the eyes of the research subject. The resultant world view offers the intercollegiate forensics community its best opportunity to understand and respond to that view.

From the base of information revealed in this paper, educators may begin to devise coping strategies to help their students and colleagues deal with the negative experiences. Educators may also find ways to emphasize and broaden the positive experiences which draw women to the activity. Such planning might be expected to enhance efforts to both recruit and retain women in the activity. At a minimum, this taxonomy may also help forensic

educators become more sensitive to the real pain the negative matrix behaviors cause their students, their professional colleagues, and their friends.

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